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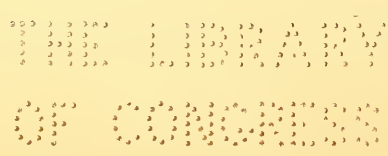
SOME NEW FRANKLIN PAPERS

A Report by J. G. Rosengarten, 52' C., to the Board of Trustees

A rough calculation shows that there are over five hundred pieces of MS. among the collection of Franklin papers recently added to the Library of the University. The papers range from Franklin's own draught of an essay on the British plantations in America in 1731, down to his latest correspondence. He preserved everything; frequently made characteristic endorsements of his replies to letters; deciphered Robert Morris' key; kept notices of scientific societies, and all formal papers; made marginal notes on the public documents sent to him, and of this kind there are more than twenty copies of Resolves of Congress and of Acts of Colonial Legislatures, and of the daily journals of Congress; broadsides of very great variety and interest, and pamphlets, many of them very curious—there are over a hundred pieces of this kind.

There are some rare Quaker papers, *e. g.*, David Lloyd's Complaint to Wm. Penn, in 1705, and a good deal of the controversial Quaker literature from that time down, and the pamphlets relating to the Quaker loyalists sent to Virginia. There is correspondence, both MS. and printed, on the right of the Proprietaries; old newspapers and magazines; a list of boys in the Charity School; a medical thesis of 1782; there are maps of the Gulf Stream and Bunker Hill; Franklin's personal accounts of his household in Paris and with Congress, and letters of every great contemporary in his own handwriting, Washington, Lafayette, Wayne, Jefferson, Whitfield, Francis Hopkinson, Benjamin Rush, Anthony Wayne; a whole history of John Paul Jones and his adventures with Landais and the other troubles that beset him; intercepted letters from Clinton to Lord George Germaine, and frequent reports on public matters from Thomas Digges, the information agent in London, and from Genet, in Paris, where he translated accounts of battles from the papers sent to him by Franklin.

With Robert Morris and Robert R. Livingston there was frequent correspondence, both personal and official, and even Franklin's patience was tried beyond silence, for on receipt of a



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Resolve of Congress on the subject of expenditures by its ministers abroad, he endorsed on it "Money, Money," as if that was the subject on all their minds, and a hard one to manage.

From France, from Germany, from Italy, came letters asking advice; Robespierre, then a young lawyer in Arras, sends to Franklin his brief of a law case in which he supported the efficacy of the lightning rod, and asks for Franklin's opinion of its merit. Turgot corresponds with Franklin about smoke prevention, and others submit schemes on every imaginable subject, topics for literary and scientific discussion, ask for offices for themselves and their children, or inquire about friends and relatives who have gone to America,—he was apparently looked on as a living encyclopedia. The University owes this collection to the efforts of Dr. Mitchell, and the best way of thanking him is to have it put in good order and made accessible to our own students and to all who are really interested in historical study. The Department of American History will no doubt second the Librarian in thus giving the use of this collection to those who can best appreciate it.

I add an extract from a letter from the former owner, Mr. George O. Holbrooke, so as to give a better idea of the value and interest of this collection:

"The manuscript Memorial of the State of the British Plantations shows that Franklin had thought over the possibility of a separation from England as early as 1731, but in the fevered times of 1749 he would not utter a word, even in Germany, that could be considered treasonable. There is not a single word in his writings about the internal difficulties of France, but the fact that he had a copy of Necker's Memorial in manuscript, before it was printed, shows that he had thought seriously of the subject. The family account of expenses at Passy, which describes minutely the small details of living, shows the hardship of the times, everything is dear but wages, which were pitifully low in proportion to everything else. Jonathan Williams' letters show the difficulties met with in carrying supplies a short distance on account of the feudal taxes, and thus give another glimpse of the restraint on life, and the eagerness of French and German officers for service in America brings it out anew.

"The letter of Ingenhous, secretary of Catharine II.,* shows one of Franklin's means of influencing public opinion on the Continent. The request of the German Pastor Knoepfl for an American Lutheran Church brings out the friendly sentiment of German teachers and scholars for the second Fatherland. The

* Physician to Maria Theresa.

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letters of English friends show what a strong current of sympathy there was for the struggling colonies among thoughtful people. The intercepted letter from Sir Henry Clinton shows the warnings that the British government received from America. The letter from the Vicomte de Lomagne would furnish material for another book like Mr. Lowell's on "The Eve of the French Revolution." Anthony Wayne's letter is really historical.

"The manuscripts show the intense care and re-corrections which Franklin bestowed on his English essays, so well exemplified in the drafts of his letters to Mme. de Forbach and others. Franklin grew up in the age of Addison, when style was a subject of careful thought, and a perfect essay a key to literary immortality. People had leisure in the days of minute newspapers. Mary Hewson's letters are delightful, and Franklin had the talent to bring out the best from every correspondent. Mrs. Stevenson's letter tells him all about her poor people in a way that shows that Franklin had always been her friend and practical helper in her kindnesses to others, and she shows her gratitude when an old woman, in the face of approaching death, she turns to him as her guide and consoler, the best man she had ever known. She had wintered and summered him in the Craven street days, and could not be deceived about his real character. When Franklin is decied as a worldly wise man, this ought to be thought of. He was a many-sided man, but his real self was benevolence and wisdom. His brief note added to her letter is touching.

"There are some characteristic notes of his on the printed bill for the repeal of the Stamp Act, and there are interesting letters from Dr. Cooper and Dr. Stiles and Mrs. Bache and his other correspondents. Indeed what was written to him seemed to be inspired by his own straightforward love of truth and by his gift of telling it in brief, clear and pregnant pages."

Two interesting letters are those from Robespierre and from Burke to Franklin. Franklin's answer to Burke is printed in Bigelow's *Life of Franklin*, Vol. II, p. 31, followed by Franklin's letter to President McKean on the subject, viz: Burgoyne's parole and the rumor that Congress intended to require his return to this country; in Bigelow's *Works of Franklin*, Vol. VII, p. 302, is Franklin's letter authorizing (under his power from Congress) Burke to negotiate the exchange of Burgoyne. The Robespierre letter is valuable on account of its rarity,—M. Bertin, a well-known authority, writes from Paris that only one letter of this period is known in France.

Robespierre was admitted to the Bar in 1781 and argued the question of the legality of paratonnerres or lightning-rods, publishing a report (without his name), "Plaidoyers appellant d'un jugement des échévins de St. Omer, qui avait ordonné la destruction d'un paratonnerre levé sur sa maison" [Argument on appeal from the judgment of the sheriffs of St. Omer, who had ordered the destruction of a lightning-rod erected on his house], and this was translated into both English and German. Franklin no doubt annotated the copy sent to him for his corrections, and returned it. A copy of it would be an interesting addition to this collection. There are many interesting letters in this collection that are well worth reproducing as contributions to the contemporary history of Franklin's times.

ROBESPIERRE TO FRANKLIN.

SIR:—A judgment rendered by the échévins of St. Omer, prohibiting the use of lightning-rods, has afforded me the opportunity of pleading before the Council of Artois the cause of a sublime discovery, for which humankind is indebted to you. The desire to aid in uprooting the prejudices opposed to its progress in our province, led me to have printed the argument which I made in this matter. I venture to hope, Sir, that you will deign to receive kindly a copy of this work, the object of which was to induce my fellow-citizens to accept one of your benefactions: happy to have been able to be of service to my region in determining its highest magistrates to receive this important discovery, happier still if I can add to this advantage the honour of securing the patronage of a man whose least merit is to be the most illustrious savant of the world. I have the honour to be with respect,

Sir,

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

DE ROBESPIERRE,

Advocate to the Council of Artois.

Arras, 1 October, 1783.

BURKE TO FRANKLIN.

DEAR SIR,

I feel, as an honest man & as a good citizen ought to feel, the Calamities of the present unhappy War. The only part, however, of these Calamities which personally affects myself is, that I have been obliged to discontinue my intercourse with you. But that misfortune I must consider as equivalent to many. I may indeed with great truth assure you, that your friendship has

Monsieur

une sentence de proscription rendue par les échevins de St. ouer contre des conducteurs électriques m'a présenté l'occasion de plaider au conseil d'arts la cause d'une découverte sublime, dont le genre humain vous est redevable. Le desir de contribuer à détruire les préjugés qui s'opposaient à ses progrès dans notre province m'a porté à faire imprimer le plaidoyer que j'ai prononcé dans cette affaire.

j'ose espérer, Monsieur, que vous daignerez recevoir avec bonté un exemplaire de cet ouvrage, dont l'objet étoit d'engager mes concitoyens à accepter un de vos bienfaits. heureux d'avoir pu être utile à mon pays, en déterminant ses premiers magistrats à accueillir cette importante découverte; plus heureux encore si je puis joindre à cet avantage l'honneur d'obtenir le suffrage d'un homme dont le moindre mérite est d'être le plus illustre servant de l'univers.

j'ai l'honneur d'être avec respect

Monsieur

votre très humble
et très obéissant serviteur
de Robespierre, avocat
au conseil d'arts

a Paris le 18bre 1783

always been an object of my ambition; & that if an high & very sincere Esteem for your Talents and Virtues could give me a title to it, I am not wholly unworthy of that honour.

I flatter myself, that your belief in the reality of these Sentiments will excuse the Liberty I take of laying before you a matter, in which I have no small concern. The application I make originates wholly from myself, & has not been suggested to me by any person whatsoever. I have lately been informed with great certainty, & with no less surprise, that the Congress have made an application for the return of my friend Genl. Burgoine to captivity in America, at a time when the Exchange of almost all the rest of the convention officers has been compleated. It is true, that this requisition has been for the present withdrawn. But then it may be renewed at every Instant, and no arrangement has been made or proposed, which may prevent a thing on all accounts so very disagreeable as to see the most opposite Interests conspiring in the persecution of a man formed by the unparelled Candour & moderation of his Mind to unite the most discordant parties in his favour.

I own this proceeding of the Congress fills me with astonishment. I am persuaded that some unusually artful management or very unexampled delusion has operated to produce an effect which cannot be accounted for on any of the ordinary principles of Nature or of policy.

I shall not enter into the particulars of the convention under which this claim is made; nor into the construction of it; nor the execution. I am not perhaps capable of doing Justice to the Merits of the Cause; & if I were, I am not disposed to put them upon any ground of argument. Because, (whatever others might and possibly ought to do) I am not pleading a point of strict right, but appealing to your known principles of honour & generosity with the freedom & privileges of an old friendship. And as I suppose you perfectly acquainted with the whole History of the extraordinary treatment that Genl. Burgoine has met with, I am resolved not to shew so much distrust in so sound a Memory & so good a judgment as yours, as to attempt to report the one or to lead the other.

I am ready to admit that Genl. Burgoine has been, & (as far as what is left him will suffer) is, a very affectionate servant of the Crown; & that in America he acted as an officer of the King (so long as fortune favoured him) with great Abilities, & distinguished fidelity, activity & spirit. You, My dear Sir, who have

made such astonishing exertions in the Cause which you espouse, & are so deeply read in human Nature & in human morals, know better than any body, that men will, & that sometimes they are bound, to take very different Views & measures of their Duty from local & from professional situation; & that we may all have equal merit in extremely different lines of Conduct. You know, Sir, that others may deserve the whole of your admiration in a Cause, in which your Judgment leads you to oppose them. But whatever our opinions may be on the origin of this fatal War, I assure you that Genl. Burgoine has the Merit of never having driven it on with Violence, or fostered & kept it alive by Evil Arts, or aggravated any of its natural Mischiefs by any unnecessary rigours; but has behaved in all occasions with that temper, which becomes a great Military Character, that loves nothing so much in the profession as the means it so frequently furnishes of generosity & humanity.

You have heard of the sacrifices he has made to his nice sense of honour on this side of the Water—sacrifices, far above the just demands of the principles to which they were made. This has been of no advantage to the Country, where he was picqued to the resignation of so much rank & emollument, both so justly earned. Shall America too, call for sacrifices which are still more sever, & of full as little advantage to those who demand them? I know the rigours of political necessity: But I see here as little of Necessity, or indeed of expedience, as of propriety. I know the respect which is due to all publick bodies: But none of them are exempt from Mistake, & the most disrespectful thing which can be done towards them, is to suppose them incapable of correcting an Errour.

If I were not fully persuaded of your liberal & manly way of thinking, I should not presume, in the hostile situation in which I stand, to make an application to you. But in this piece of experimental Philosophy, I run no risque of offending you. I apply, not to the Ambassador of America, but to Doctor Franklin the Philosopher; my friend, & the lover of his species. In that light, whatever colour politicks may take, I shall ever have the honour to be,

Dear Sir

Your most faithful

& obedt. humble sert.

EDM BURKE

Charles Street,
August 15, 1781.

A PROPHECY FULFILLED.

The Ingenhouse letter referred to above is one of the most remarkable of the collection, especially remarkable for its prophecy of our eventual acquisition of the "sugar and indigo islands." Whether Maria Theresa of Austria's physician means Cuba and Porto Rico, or the Philippines, is perhaps doubtful, but in either case the prophecy is cause for marvel. We have not space to quote his letter, which is dated December 14, 1777, in full. This passage is the most interesting:

"Now will Brittain be convinced (but perhaps too late) that America was not to be overawed by threats, nor overpowered by arms, and that it lost a much braver Nation than it did seem to consider it before (*Nec habet fortuna regressum*).

"They will now, perhaps, acknowledging first that liberty and independency which America has wrested out of their hands, look out for their friendship and solícite them as their protectors instead of their subjects; even as the haughty Spanjars did with our ancestors.

"If this is not the case, I fore see, that they will endeavor to make their contest looked upon as interesting whole Europe, as much as it does themselves. The Americans will now not only become masters of that part of their continent, which is still feably kept in their weakened hands; but they will soon set up as conquerors of the new world. They will subject not only to their own empire the Neighboring Empire of Mexico, the back settlements of the Spanjards, but they will soon look upon the sugar and indigo islands as a necessary acquisition for their well-fare, and drain, by a monopoly of those universally necessary commodities the most solid richness from the rest of the world. They will depopulate half Europe, from its inhabitants, who will crowd to that happy shore, where true liberty and a new welth unknown in Europe will attend them. They will soon invade the British dominions in the east and take to themselves the immance richness which the English have derived from them. in short America will soon become the most powerfull nation, which ever existed upon the face of the earth, and will, as a second Rome, extend their dominion far out of their own country, and become arbiters of Europe itself, making it dependent of its will. This, I know particularly, will now be the language of Brittain, endeavoring to make a common cause of it. The Russians seem to keep back in this Sceme by a war, with which they are continually threatened thro the measures of a nation, well known to you."

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